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PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO
DE RUEHGO #0005 0071026
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6982
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0794
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4340
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7885
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5446
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1234
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

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DEPT FOR P, EAP/MLS, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: BURMESE REGIME "TOO BUSY" FOR GAMBARI

REF: A. USUN 8

[1](#)B. 07 BEIJING 7657

Classified By: CDA Shari Villarosa for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Diplomats attending the annual Independence Day dinner in Nay Pyi Taw on January 4 heard from several different government officials that the Than Shwe regime was "too busy" to receive UN Special Advisor Gambari before the mid-April annual water festival. The Chinese Ambassador confirmed to Charge that he had the same information. He agreed with Charge's characterization that the dialogue appeared dead. He acknowledged that the regime had done nothing to improve the economic situation, as China had advised. Noting we had been urged by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to discourage turmoil (ref B), the regime had increased the chances of turmoil by significantly hiking satellite registration fees from 6,000 (\$5) to 1 million kyat (\$800). He expressed surprise at learning this, although his interpreter was already aware. Charge warned him that the regime had now angered all of Burma's many football fans by depriving them of one of their few escapes.

[1](#)2. (C) Comment: Than Shwe never had any intention of opening up the political process to his long-time political opponents. Instead he announced the appointment of a liaison officer and hinted at more dialogue to deflect international criticism that grew in the aftermath of his regime's violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators led by monks. It is no coincidence that the last time the liaison officer met with Aung San Suu Kyi (November 19, 2007) was during the ASEAN meetings in Singapore. Those meetings have adjourned for another year, so the regime no longer has to worry about any immediate criticism for its backsliding from its neighbors. In the meantime, the authorities have continued to arrest political activists a few at a time steadily into the new year. They appear determined to ram through their sham constitution without any contrary voices weighing in, either from the Burmese people or through Gambari. So now is the time that we should mobilize other nations to go public in criticizing Than Shwe for his continued defiance of the Burmese people's desires for openness, reform, freedom, and democracy. The ASEANS said that there could be no return to the status quo ante, but that is precisely what Than Shwe has done, making it even worse. Then we should broadcast these

statements into Burma to give hope to the people that the world has not forgot them, and remind Than Shwe that his efforts to cut off information to the people will fail.

VILLAROSA